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**Chris Bell**  
**Congress of the United States**  
**House of Representatives**  
**25th District, Texas**

June 15, 2004

**Statement from Congressman Chris Bell**

The United States House of Representatives is one of the greatest institutions in human history. This House of Representatives belongs to all the people of America - past and future included. It is appropriately called "the People's House" - and as the People's House, it is a testament to the universal value of making life better during the time we're allotted here on earth.

But the credibility of this great institution is under attack.

This attack on Congress comes in the form of serious criminal acts including bribery, extortion, fraud, money laundering and abuse of power.

This attack harms all Americans because it damages the credibility of our laws and the legislative process by which we seek national consensus.

All Americans should be alarmed by this attack against Congress. Whether we are Democrats or Republicans, we must stand together and act to protect the People's House from these attacks.

I am a relative newcomer to Washington. But I have come to love the People's House and to have an even greater respect for the wisdom of those individuals who founded our nation and wrote the United States Constitution. That is why I will not stand idly by and do nothing in light of the extremely serious attacks against the credibility of this institution.

It is also why, today, I am requesting that the House Committee on Standards of Official Conduct immediately investigate the criminal activities of House Majority Leader Tom DeLay.

It is no secret to many Members of Congress, Democrats and Republicans

alike, that House Majority Leader DeLay and his associates have repeatedly conspired to break federal and state laws and have abused his power as an officer of the federal government.

A mountain of evidence indicates that Tom DeLay may be guilty of serious criminal acts including bribery, extortion, fraud, money laundering and abuse of power.

Any reasonable person -- Republican, Democrat or Independent - will conclude, after reviewing the evidence, that Mr. DeLay and his associates have engaged in an organized effort to gain personal political power at any cost. In their hunger for power, they have flouted the law at taxpayer expense.

The request for an investigation that I have submitted to the House Committee on Standards of Official Conduct includes three areas in which Mr. DeLay should be investigated:

1. DeLay illegally solicited and accepted political contributions in return for official action.
2. DeLay's TRMPAC laundered illegal corporate contributions for the purpose of influencing Texas legislative races and failed to properly disclose its financial activity.
3. DeLay improperly used his office to importune federal agencies for a partisan objective wholly unrelated to his official duties.

There are dozens of news articles that document the criminal activities of the House Majority Leader. Just one example among many is the news article from last year in *The Texas Observer* titled "Rise of the Machine." It is no wonder that editorial boards, from the *Houston Chronicle* to *The New York Times*, as well as independent ethics groups have demanded that the House Ethics Committee investigate the questionable activities of Mr. Delay.

But news organizations and independent ethics groups do not have the authority to launch a formal investigation of a Member of Congress. According to House Rules, only a Member of Congress can request an Ethics investigation.

And in a joint statement released earlier this year in March, Chairman Joel Hefley and Ranking Member Allen Mollohan stated that the Committee is absolutely committed to "pursuing any credible claim that a Member or staff person has violated any provision of the House rules." The Chair and

Ranking Member said in that same statement that they will investigate wrongdoing in a nonpartisan manner.

That is the right thing to say...it is the right thing to do...and let us hope on behalf of the American people and this great institution that the wrongdoing committed by Tom DeLay and his associates is investigated in a nonpartisan manner.

Throughout my public service career, I have attempted to foster a more ethical, open and accountable process by which we govern ourselves. Back in Houston, I served as the Chairman of the City Council Ethics Committee and, during my time here in Congress, I was honored to serve on the Government Reform Committee.

Battles for greater ethics in government are never easy. They are not won in a day. And in this case, I do not underestimate the dangers and political risks involved in asking for an investigation of the powerful House Majority Leader.

I expect the full wrath of Mr. DeLay's attack machine - here on the floor of the People's House, in the hallways that lead to and from this great chamber, and in news organizations and talk shows around our country.

So be it. Let them attack. My message to them is that no one is above the law, no matter how powerful. Not even Tom DeLay.

This is one ethics battle that none of us can afford to lose - a battle for the dignity and credibility of the House of Representatives.

If you were to ask many of my Republican colleagues off the record, they would tell you that they disapprove of Mr. DeLay's tactics and illegal activities. But because Tom DeLay has created a climate of fear inside this institution, it is awkward for these honorable Republicans to make public statements about the so-called "Hammer."

Last week we honored the life of Ronald Reagan - a great American who could disagree with political opponents during the day, yet be a wonderful companion and friend after hours.

Last week we also heard a lot of talk about restoring the House to a more civil and collegial state of affairs. I couldn't agree more - which is why I urge the House Ethics Committee to handle this request to investigate Mr. DeLay in a non partisan fashion, with the seriousness and thoroughness it deserves. Only then can we move closer to healing the divide between Democrats and Republicans in this body; only then can we turn our full attention to working on behalf of the American people.

With power comes duty. I have done my duty as a Member of Congress in requesting this investigation. Responsibility now lies with the House Committee on Standards of Official Conduct to investigate Congressman DeLay's pattern of corruption, conspiracy and criminal activity.

Let us join together in restoring the credibility of this great institution and let us begin today by launching an investigation into Mr. DeLay and his attacks against the People's House.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Chris Bell". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a large initial "C" and a stylized "B".